

3,987,860 to Jabsen, U.S. Patent No. 3,011,962 to Koch et al, U.S. Patent No. 3,248,299 to Junkermann et al, U.S. Patent No. 3,708,393 to Waymire et al; or U.S. Patent No. 3,726,761 to Thorel et al.

First, Applicants wish to thank Examiner Behrend for the April 3, 2002, personal interview at which time the outstanding issues in this case were discussed. During the interview, amendments and arguments substantially as included in this response were discussed. While no agreement was reached, Examiner Behrend indicated that the amendments to Claim 17 patentably define over the cited references.

In response to the objection to the drawings and the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, provided herewith is a separate Letter Requesting Approval for Drawing Changes, which changes add Figure 6 showing a container having a plurality of compartments for transporting nuclear fuel assemblies. In addition, the specification has been amended to include a brief description of this figure. Support for Figure 6 is provided by original Claim 16 and therefore Figure 6 does not raise an issue of new matter. Thus, the objection to the drawings and the rejection of Claim 32 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, is believed to be overcome.

Turning now to the merits, in order to expedite issuance of a patent in this case, Claim 17 has been amended to recite elements not disclosed in the cited prior art references. Specifically, Claim 17 has been amended to recite at least one pneumatic cavity configured to move the mobile structure in the transverse direction thereby clamping and unclamping the mobile structure on the fuel assembly in response to pressure changes in the pneumatic cavity, and further to recite an air inlet control device that provides air to the pneumatic cavity. As discussed in the April 3, 2002 interview, none of the prior art references to Knight, Jabsen, Koch et al, Junkermann et al, Waymire et al, and Thorel et al disclose a

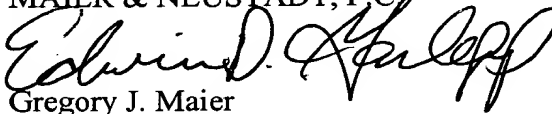
pneumatic configuration. Therefore Claim 17, as amended, patentably defines over the cited references. In this regard, Claim 32 is amended in the same way as Claim 17 and therefore Claim 32 also patentably defines over the cited references.

In addition, Claim 29 has been amended to depend from Claim 17. Claim 29 is directed to the pneumatic device shown in Figure 5. It is noted that the Examiner withdrew Claim 29 from consideration because it depended from Claim 25, which was directed to a non-elected species. Applicants respectfully submit that since Claim 29 now properly depends from Claim 17, this claim should be considered by the Examiner. Finally, as Claims 18-21 and Claim 29 depend from Claim 17, these claims patentably define over the cited references for the reasons stated above with respect to Claim 17.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application and the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. An early and favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE SPECIFICATION

Page 5, between lines 27 and 28, insert:

--Figure 6 shows a container having a plurality of compartments for transporting nuclear fuel assemblies;--

Page 11, after line 30, insert:

--Figure 6 shows a container having a plurality of compartments for transporting nuclear fuel assemblies;--

IN THE CLAIMS

--17. (Twice Amended) A transport device for housing a long length nuclear fuel assembly, said device comprising:

a compartment having substantially the same length as the fuel assembly, said compartment having fixed walls extending in a longitudinal direction and defining an interior space of the compartment, and an opening at a distal end of the compartment in said longitudinal direction;

a fixed structure rigidly attached to one of said fixed walls of the compartment, and comprising at least one fixed guide element extending in a transverse direction transverse to the longitudinal direction of the compartment;

a mobile structure that can be moved in the transverse direction to apply pressure on the fuel assembly, the mobile structure comprising at least one transverse mobile guide element slidably engaging the fixed guide element on the fixed structure,

an adjustable clamping device comprising:

at least one [adjustable clamping element] pneumatic cavity configured to [move] provide a force on the mobile structure in said transverse direction thereby adjusting a clamping force of the mobile structure on the fuel assembly [using an adjustment device] in response to pressure changes in the pneumatic cavity, and

a gas inlet control device located at said distal end of said compartment in the longitudinal direction and configured to [act on the clamping element] provide air to said pneumatic cavity to clamp the fuel assembly in a fixed position within the compartment.

29. (Amended) Device according to claim [27] 17, wherein the combined guide elements and the adjustable clamping [means] device comprise:

a cylindrical jack body with a transverse axis, rigidly attached to the fixed structure comprising a guide rod in which a compressed air inlet duct has been formed along its axis projecting from its free end, a plurality of cylindrical chambers at its periphery with an axis parallel to the jack axis, each of the chambers containing a compression spring, the springs clamping the mobile structure into the fuel assembly,

a fixed piston rigidly attached to the said free end of the guide rod comprising a seal at its periphery,

a mobile collar rigidly attached to the mobile structure located inside the jack body and adjusted to the shape of said jack body, this collar being inserted between the fixed piston and the jack body and sliding along the guide rod along a corresponding bore formed in said collar, said collar also comprising at its periphery a plurality of housings that nest in an

adjusted manner into each of the chambers by moving transversely to the longitudinal direction of the fuel assembly,

wherein said air inlet control device comprises a compressed gas supply means opening at the accessible end of the compartment and carrying gas into [the space] a pneumatic cavity located between the fixed piston and the mobile collar through the duct[, the springs clamping the mobile structure onto the fuel assembly].

32. (Twice Amended) Container for the transport of nuclear fuel assemblies, comprising:

a plurality of transport devices each housing a long length nuclear fuel assembly, each transport device comprising:

a compartment having substantially the same length as the fuel assembly, said compartment having fixed walls extending in a longitudinal direction and defining an interior space of the compartment, and an opening at a distal end of the compartment in said longitudinal direction;

a fixed structure rigidly attached to one of said fixed walls of the compartment, and comprising at least one fixed guide element extending in a transverse direction transverse to the longitudinal direction of the compartment;

a mobile structure that can be moved in the transverse direction to apply pressure on the fuel assembly, the mobile structure comprising at least one transverse mobile guide element slidably engaging the fixed guide element on the fixed structure,

an adjustable clamping device comprising:

at least one [adjustable clamping element] pneumatic cavity configured to move the mobile structure in said transverse direction thereby clamping and unclamping the

mobile structure on the fuel assembly [using an adjustment device] in response to pressure changes in the pneumatic cavity, and

[a] an air inlet control device located at said distal end of said compartment in the longitudinal direction and configured to [act on the clamping element] provide air to said pneumatic cavity to clamp the fuel assembly in a fixed position within the compartment.--